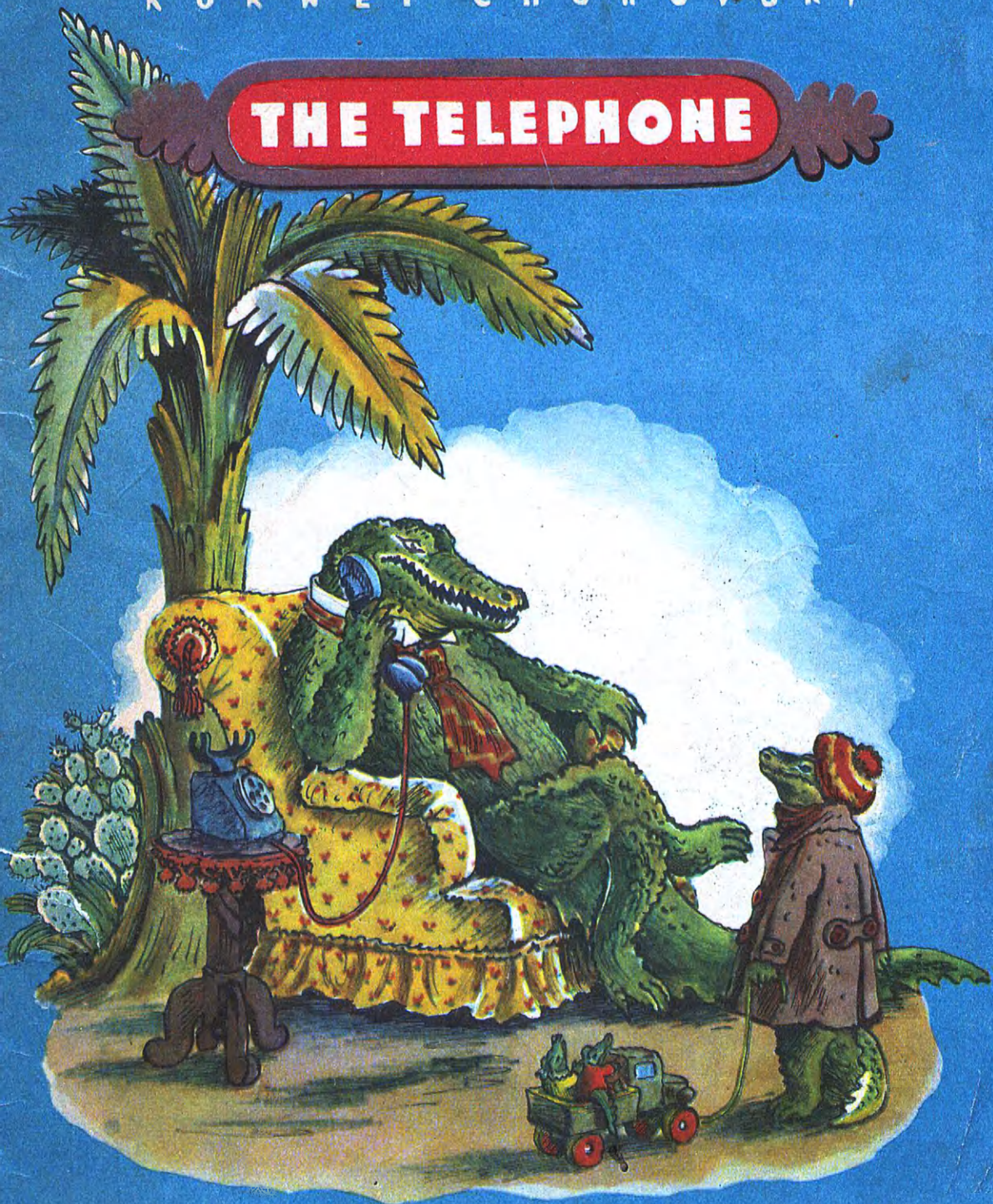


K O R N E I C H U K O V S K Y

THE TELEPHONE



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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

Moscow





My telephone rang.

"Hello,

Who's speaking?"

"The Elephant."

"Oh,

Where do you happen to be?"

"Jungle-Town, Camel-Street, 3."

"What do you want?"

"Some chocolate, sweet,

To give my sonnie a bit of a treat."

"A pound or two?"

"Oh, a ton will do.

He just wants a bite,

He's a wee little mite."

The Crocodile phoned me next.

He was terribly vexed and perplexed:

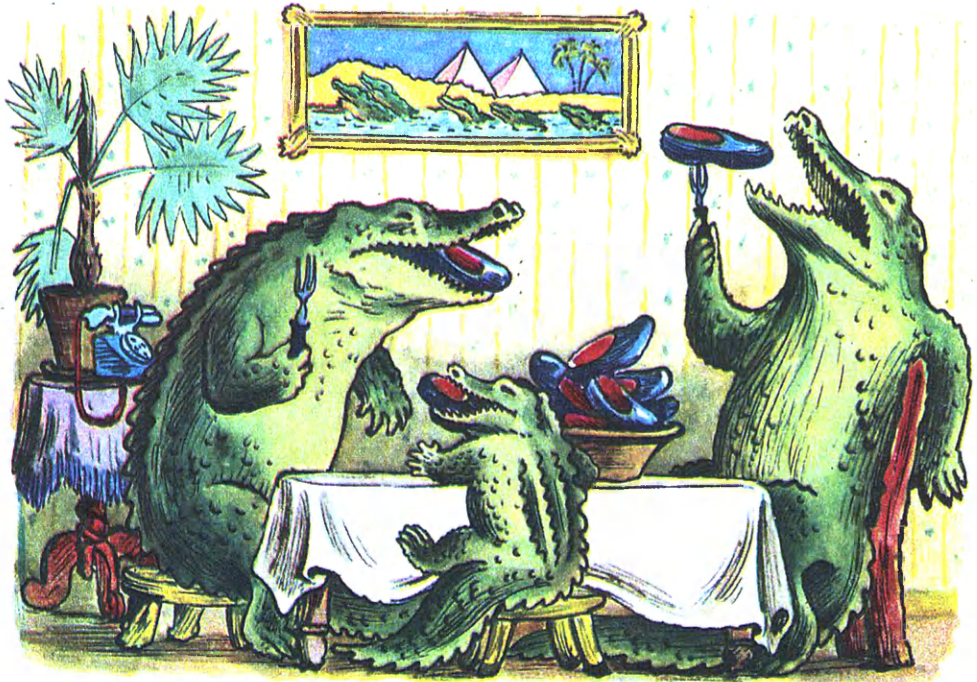
"I'm sorry, dear friend,

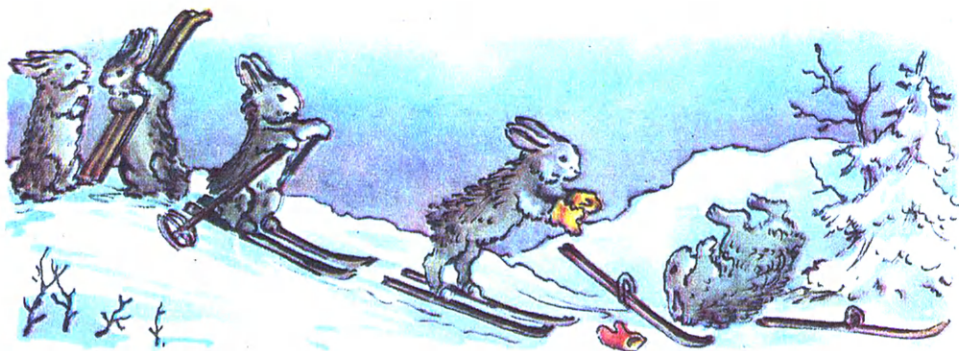
But I wish you could send

A couple of pairs of galoshes

For me and my wife and Totosha—"

"You do wear them fast!
Why, Wednesday last
I sent you a dozen or so
Splendid ones too, you know!"
"Ah, those that you sent us
Last Wednesday, my dear,
We have eaten already, I fear.
And now we are waiting
(I hope not in vain)
To have some galoshes
For dinner again.
A dozen of sweet new galoshes!"





Then some Bunnies put in a call:
"Send us mittens, please,
We've none left at all."

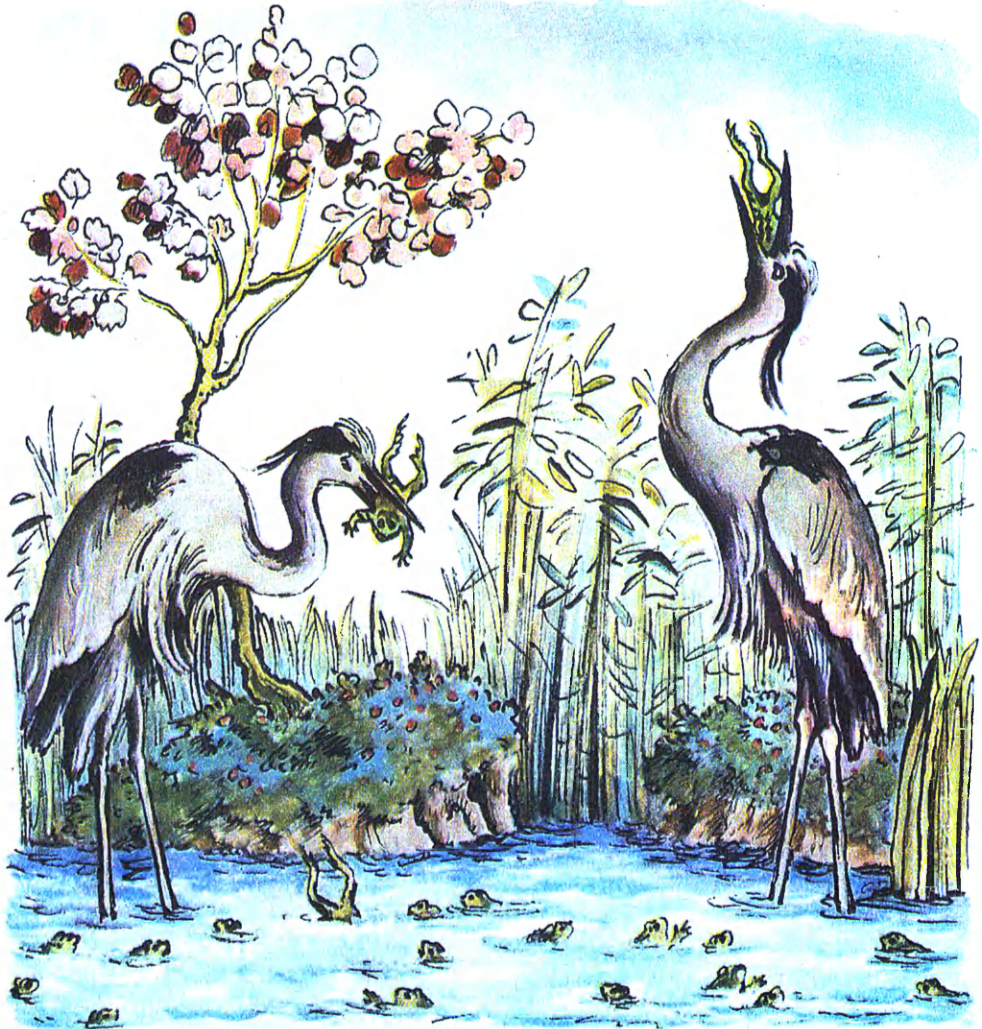
Then a call came from two Chimpanzees:
"Send us some books, will you please."





The next one to call was Bruin:
My ear-drums were threatened with ruin.
“Now look here, my friend, don’t bellow!
Can’t you speak like a decent old fellow!”
But he kept on mooing and booing,
Such a worrisome, bothersome Bruin!
“Hang up the receiver, please!”

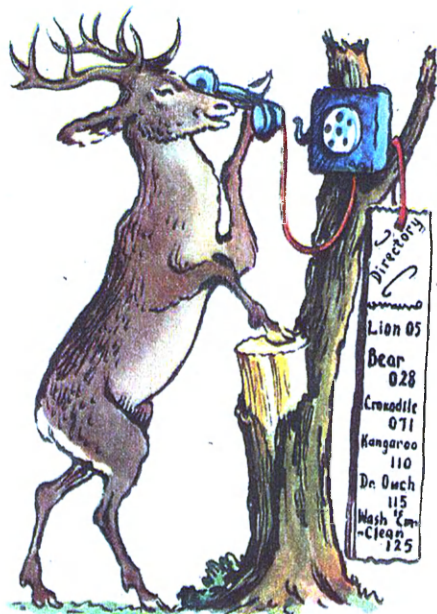
Next called some Cranes from the bogs:
“We’ve got indigestion from frogs,
And the pain in our tummies is hateful!
Besides, we’ve got chills,
Do send us some pills.
We’ll be awfully, awfully grateful!”





When the Sow rang up, it was so.
She asked me: "Perhaps you know
Some Nightingale who would agree
To sing a duet with me.
If you do, please send him along
And we'll sing a nice little song."
Well, I felt like starting a row.
"A Nightingale sing with a Sow?
Better call for a Crow right now!"

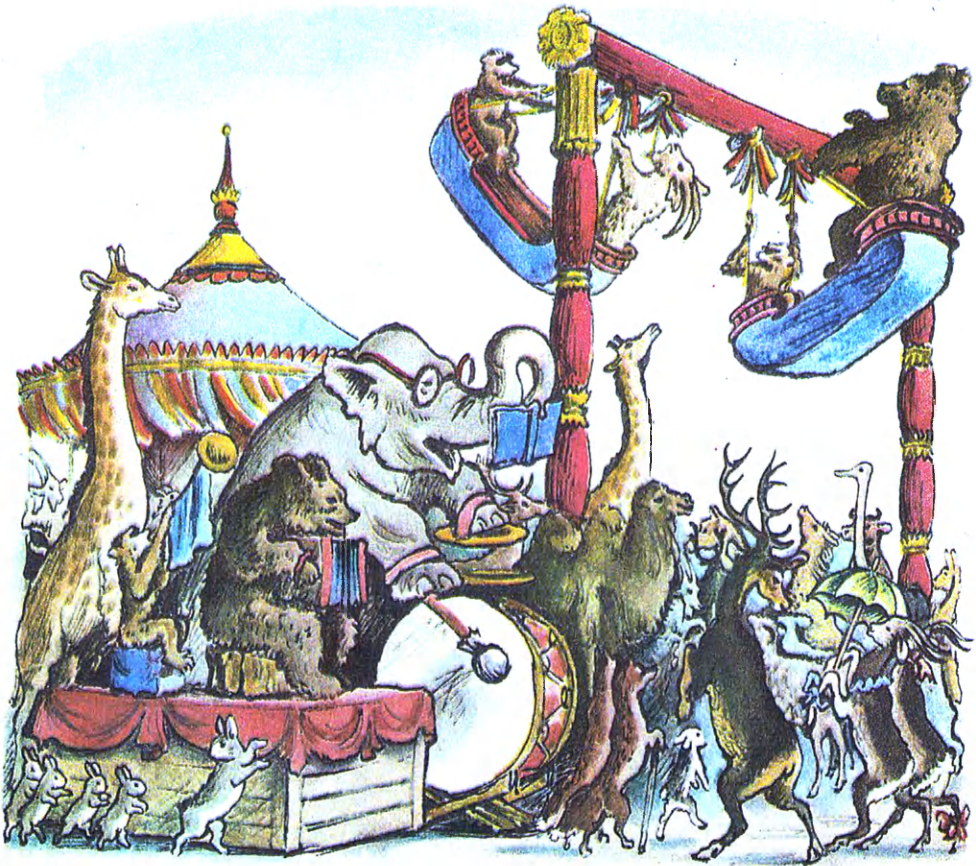
Then again from the Bear:
"Come and rescue the Seal
He's touched an electric eel!"

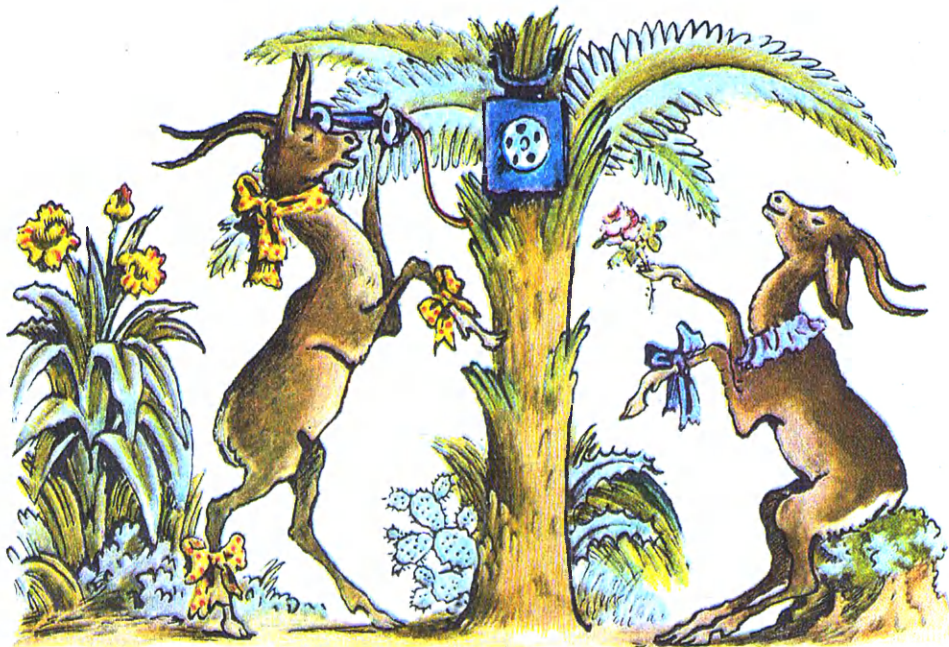


All day long it's the same old thing:
Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling—
They ring,
And they ring,
And they ring.

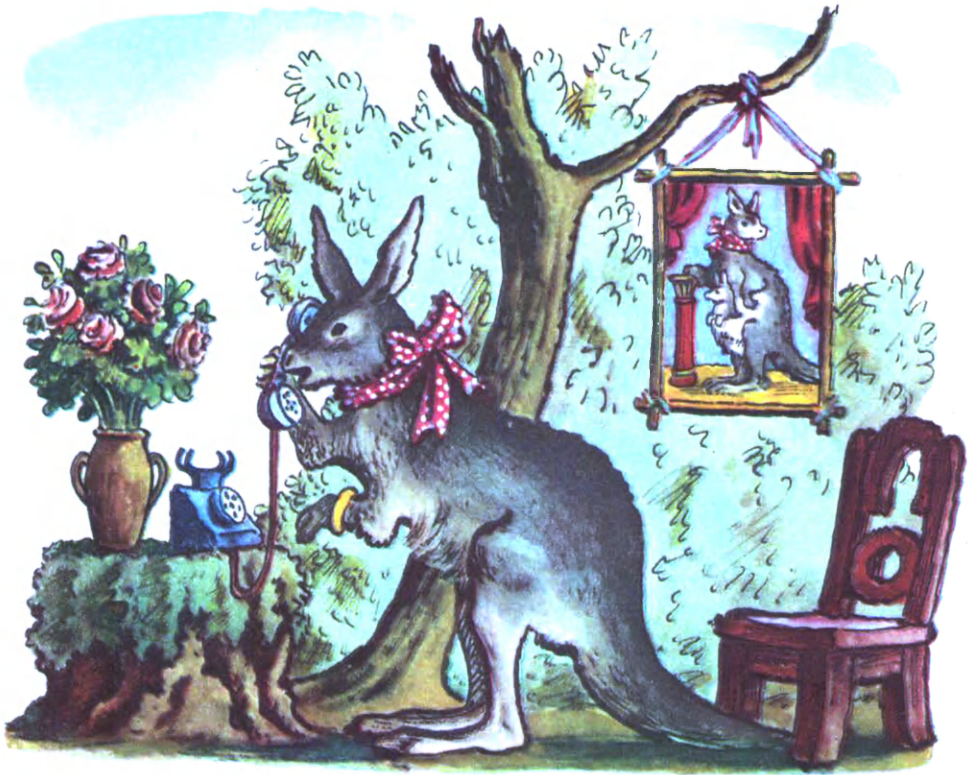


Not so long ago a pair
of Gazelles rang in despair:
“What has happened with the fair?
Are the seesaws no more there?
It's a loss we couldn't bear!”





“Tut-tut-tut!
There, there, there!
What’s the matter with the fair?
Swings and seesaws—all are there.”
Stop your noise or, I declare,
I’ve a mind to pull your hair!
Be off with you to the fair!
Still those silly good-for-nothings
Whined and wailed about the fair.
What a very stupid pair!



Last Friday the Kangaroo called:
"This is Wash-'Em-Clean's flat, I am told."
I got frightfully angry at that,
So I yelled, "No, it *isn't* his flat!"
"Then where's Wash-'Em-Clean?"
"I'm afraid I don't know.
Try seventy-seven-six-o."





I've been burning the lights
Three nights,
I'm dreaming of bed,
I'm half dead.
When will it leave me alone,
That phone?
"Who is it?"
"The Rhino."
"Well?"
"Come quickly,
It's dreadful to tell!"

"What's happened?

Earthquake or fire?"

"No—Hippo's stuck in the mire."

"Stuck in the mire?"

"And how!

He'll be up to his ears by now.

Oh dear, if you don't hurry here

Poor Hippo will soon disappear,

Ah, Hippo will die

Like a fly!"

"Now, now, I'm coming, don't shout,

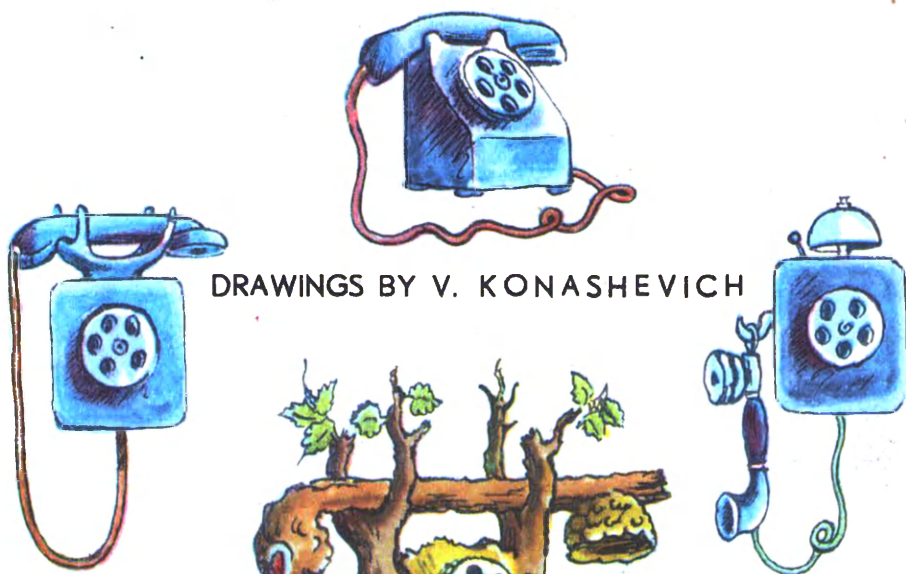
I'll help you to pull him out."



By golly, it's really a job
To pull Hippo out of the bog!



TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY D. ROTTENBERG



КОРНЕЙ ЧУКОВСКИЙ
ТЕЛЕФОН

